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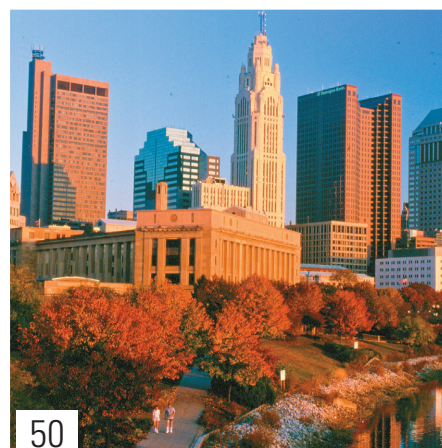


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Volume 16, Issue 414 • April 7-20, 2011

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3715 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55407
LavenderYellowPages.com
612-436-4660 office
877-515-9969 toll free
612-436-4685 fax
612-436-4664 subscriptions
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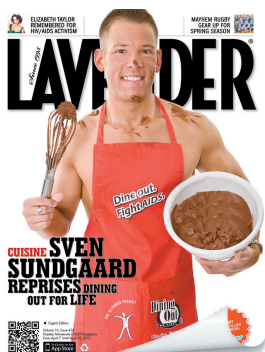


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LAVENDER DEBUTS EXCITING CHANGES!

by George Holdgrafer



As *Lavender* approaches the beginning of our 17th year of serving the Twin Cities and surrounding GLBT community in May, we're debuting exciting changes with this issue. You'll notice a host of new things we're unveiling with you, our readers and advertisers, in mind.

- *Lavender* now has shorter, more relevant and compelling editorial content, with enhanced design and more photos. Our two-page Calendar, which has brief listings to fill you in on more of what's going on around town, includes events formerly in the Bar Calendar.

- *Lavender* now has expanded coverage in a number of areas. Wanda Wisdom gives you the latest dish in "Bits and Pieces." Justin Jones provides a unique view on the social scene in "Sugar & Spice." Brian Cheese returns to bring you the latest in GLBT sports. "Leather Life," by Steve Lenius, appears more often. Watch for more new offerings soon, such as gardening tips by Scott Endres starting in our April 21 issue.

- *Lavender* welcomes input and ideas from everyone in our community. We invite you to participate in our Reader Survey at <lavendermagazine.com/survey>. As always, your opinion counts! ☐



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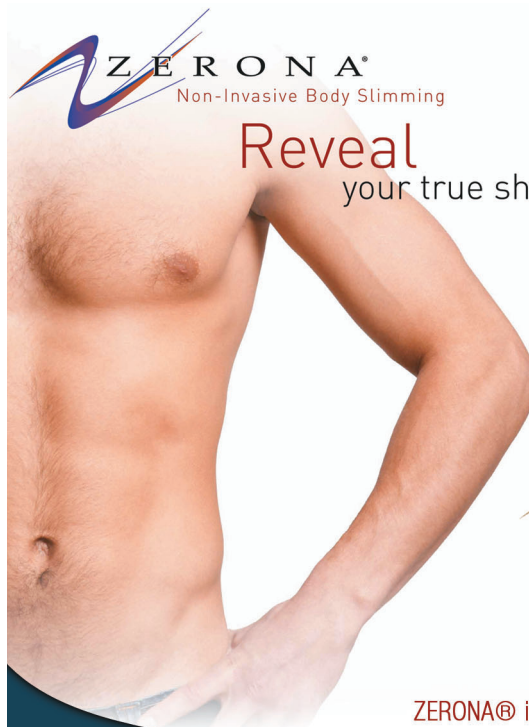
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The Girl with the Violet Eyes: Elizabeth Taylor

BACK IN THE day, folks took their star fix from radios and cold print: film mags like *Photoplay*, *Screen Fan*, *Movie Star Parade*, *Motion Picture*, and *Movie Life*.

Back in the day, print was the juiciest source of gossip, the true gen on the glitterati, though TV had wedged a foot in the door.

Back in the day—in the spirit of full disclosure, I'll confess—I was less than a decade younger than the most glamorous of them all, the girl with the violet eyes: Elizabeth Taylor.

She was just 14 in *National Velvet*, then in a single burst it seemed, she was glamorously grown-up, miles removed from me or any of the other callow beings within my personal ambit.

The nearest degree of separation I had from her luminosity was in 1957, when her third husband, director Mike Todd, came to a Hartford, Connecticut, theater to tout the opening of his hugely-popular (five Oscars) *Around the World in 80 Days*. A captivating showman, he apologized that his wife wasn't able to join us, then left to a standing ovation as the theater darkened, and the curtains opened. Todd

perished only months later, on March 22, 1958, when his plane, *The Lucky Liz*, went down in a blizzard outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Liz, luckily, was home abed with a cold, and was not aboard. It was a shocking current event then, not a historic factoid.

I can't say I was an avid fan—Robert Mitchum held that place in my pantheon—but Liz was always *there*. You couldn't be unaware of her eight marriages (Elizabeth Taylor Hilton Wilding Todd Fisher Burton Burton Warner Fortensky), her seven divorces, her major illnesses and phoenix-like recoveries.

Finally, after the wasting sickness and death of her friend, Rock Hudson, in 1985 from AIDS, an illness no one, not even medical pundits, had known about back in the day, Liz's tireless work raised millions for the sufferers of the disease until her own death on March 23 at the age of 79.

Her life was feisty, fearless—narcissistic at times—yet unstinting and always persevering, game in or out of her wheelchair.

Farewell, Liz. Your stellar work in film and for HIV/AIDS will continue, but the firmament is now dimmed by not a few angstroms. □

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A Chicky Booby a Day Helps Keep the Fat Rolls Away

PEOPLE ALWAYS ASK me how I maintain my man-girlish figure. In addition to countless hours flying on a big box at The Firm, I try to eat pretty healthily, too. One of my secrets is to make meals for the week in advance, so I don't end up eating whatever fat-laden fast food ends up at my fingertips.

Chicky boobies are a staple in my boudoir pantry, and chicky booby salad is one of my favorites. Here's my brand-new basic recipe. It's meant to make enough lunches for a week for two people. If that's too much, just halve it.

First, to poach the chicken breasts, you'll need:

2 3 lb. bags of frozen boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 heaping tbsp. of Better Than Bouillon Chicken Base
1 tsp. Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce
1/2 tsp. Kitchen Bouquet Browning & Seasoning Sauce

Add Better Than Bouillon, Worcestershire, and Kitchen Bouquet to stockpot. Add chicken breasts. Add just enough water to cover chicken. Bring to a boil. Lower heat, and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through. Remove from heat. Reserve at least a cup of the liquid (pour through a sieve to remove bits of fat). Remove chicken, and dice. Set aside.

Next, to prepare the dressing, you'll need:

1 heaping c. of mayonnaise (I prefer the kind made with olive oil)
Liquid from poached chicken
2 tsp. salt
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 scant tsp. dry poultry seasoning (or your favorite spices for chicken)
3 cloves garlic, minced

Combine mayo, salt, pepper, garlic, and poultry seasoning in a large mixing bowl. With a whisk, slowly incorporate the reserved liquid into the mayo mixture. Add enough liquid until the mixture has the consistency of a thin pancake batter—runny, but not watery.

Finally, to assemble the salad, you'll need:

2 bunches green onions, diced
1/2 jalapeño, diced
Poached chicken, diced
Dressing

In the large mixing bowl that already has the dressing in it, fold in onions, jalapeño, and diced chicken. Mix until everything is thoroughly coated. Serve on a bed of lettuce or fresh greens with sliced tomatoes and cucumber. Enjoy! ▣

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ganization, so should you refuse to accept advertising from the tobacco industry.

It is indisputable that the tobacco industry is targeting LGBT communities, as well as having a long history of campaign donations to politicians pushing for an antigay agenda.

Lavender should join the list of LGBT publications that have developed policies refusing to accept tobacco industry ads or dollars.

Doing that will not only make it harder for the industry to reach our communities, it will show that *Lavender* truly has the best interests of Minnesota's LGBT communities at heart.

LORETTA WORTHINGTON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
RAINBOW HEALTH INITIATIVE

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ment, which guarantees Americans freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Therefore, we reject censorship. To that end, we accept advertising from a wide spectrum: bars/alcohol companies and sobriety organizations; Democrats, Republicans, and Independents; churches and atheist groups. *Lavender* does not believe that tobacco use is homophobic. We will continue to give our readers the right to choose which advertisers they wish to support.

Letters are subject to editing for grammar, punctuation, space, and libel. They should be no more than 300 words. Letters must include name, address, and phone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Priority will be given to letters that refer to material previously published in *Lavender* Magazine. Submit letters to *Lavender* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 3715 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55407; or e-mail <editor@lavendermagazine.com>.

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GLIMPSES

by George Holdgrafer

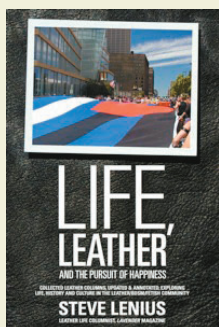


1

Robbins Promoted to OutFront Minnesota Operations Director

Adam Robbins recently was promoted to Operations Director at OutFront Minnesota. He previously served as Member and Event Coordinator for nine months. He first worked for the organization in 2006, helping the justFair Lobby Day, and assisting the Public Policy Director as Campaign Coordinator.

Photo by Jana Noonan Photography



2

Lenius Book Is Finalist for Leather Book Award

Life, Leather and the Pursuit of Happiness, by Lavender "Leather Life" writer Steve Lenius, has been named one of five finalists for the Geoff Mains Non-fiction Book Award presented by the National Leather Association: International. The winner will be announced on April 17 at the organization's annual general meeting.

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DINING OUT FOR LIFE IS THE ALIVENESS PROJECT'S LARGEST FUNDRAISER

by E.B. Boatner

APRIL 28 MARKS The Aliveness Project (TAP)'s 17th-annual hosting of Dining Out for Life, as well as TAP Director of Fundraising and Special Events Tim Marburger's ninth year producing, in his words, "this fun day of dining out to benefit a great cause. "

As *Lavender* goes to press, 167 restaurants are signed to participate in the event, offering 265 meals with breakfast, lunch, and dinner opportunities.

Participating restaurants are in Minneapolis and St. Paul; Twin Cities suburbs such as Champlin, Edina, Fridley, Maple Grove, Maplewood, and White Bear Lake; and Duluth and Rochester.

Crucial to the event are Dining Out for Life Ambassadors, who attend each meal at each restaurant.

As Marburger explains, "On the day of the event, they welcome everyone, visit with diners, and answer any questions about The Aliveness Project or Dining Out for Life. They register diners for great prize drawings, and ask for extra donations. It's a big task, but so much fun—like throwing a dinner party, and not having to do the dishes. "

TAP's largest fundraiser, Dining Out for Life provided \$161,000—about 14 percent—of the organization's 2010 budget. Marburger is aiming for at least \$170,000 this year.

Marburger points out, "This fundraiser helps us provide assistance to every program we provide: food shelf, integrative therapies, hot meals, case management, and so much more—and most certainly helps The Aliveness Project continue working in the black with no interruption or loss of services. "

Cheryl Schweitzer, who began volunteering some 10 years ago, enthuses, "I have been an Ambassador at the Birchwood Café, which I love—the food and the desserts are awesome. My daughter, who is now 18, has been coming with me since we started volunteering."



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Ambassador Dana Munson shares, "I believe that the real work begins by getting your peers excited about wanting to participate in the event. I think once the event begins, it really is the job of the Ambassador

to represent the organization in a professional manner. Every table needs to be greeted. Every table needs 'I Ate' stickers. Every table needs all the other supplemental materials. Every individual needs to feel as if they were

part of a very special event, and that by participating they gave back to the community."

First-timer Dr. Paul Shapiro, who will be one of the event's new "Super Ambassadors," notes, "Certain restaurants and Ambassadors are donating prizes, and for a \$50 contribution, one will be entered in that restaurant's drawing."

Shapiro and partner Lee Roehl will be at Lucia's, combining their \$100 Lucia's Gift Certificate with the Jungle Theater's \$320 season tickets for two.

Marburger emphasizes, "Dining out for Life helps The Aliveness Project keep the food on the table, the integrative therapies happening, and helps put 46 tons of food out through the food shelf. Many of our members are in great need on many levels. Each person can make a difference by doing something 'simple,' like being an Ambassador and/or dining out that day: breakfast, lunch, *and* dinner."

Visit <www.aliveness.org> for dining sites and updates □

SVEN SUNGAARD REPRISES AS THE FACE OF DINING OUT FOR LIFE

KARE-11 meteorologist Sven Sundgaard is in his fifth year with Dining Out for Life.

Sundgaard, who has been pleased to see that participation in the event has grown, even in the down economy, says, "That's very encouraging, and really shows

the spirit of giving and caring among our people here in the Twin Cities."

Dining Out offers opportunities for education, as Sundgaard points out: "There are new people and folks not there for Dining Out for Life, and they're very interested in learning some things they didn't know [about the GLBT community]. Also, recipients get to see just how much the community cares."

As you dine, try to spot a passing meteorologist, as Sundgaard shares, "I will be at several restaurants—some 20 to 30—briefly, to thank people for coming out. The list is kept top-secret, though. I don't even know it myself!"

Sundgaard remarks, "I look at the day as almost a holiday—a day to remember how help changes things for the better for everyone. It's a celebration of life." □

ARE YOU BEING SERVED? DINING OUT FOR LIFE HOSTS SHARE

Bambu Asian Cuisine



Photo by Alexander Sloan

Owner Yin Thong says, "I was born and raised in Vietnam. I came to this country in 1992 as an immigrant. Lutheran Social Service sponsored me from a Hong Kong refugee camp, and placed me in a foster home with my foster parents, John and Patty Shrake, whom I lived with until I graduated from Hamline University. Both of my parents are Chinese."

"I opened Bambu in 2007, when I realized I needed to create work for my younger sisters, brothers, sister-in-law, and niece soon to be joining me, and my parents, whom I sponsored here."

"Participating in an event like Dining Out for Life helps me to realize how lucky I am to have good health, a

good mind, and a strong body. It also makes me become more aware of the community that I live in, and want to do more to help those who are less fortunate than me."

1715 Beam Ave.,
Maplewood
(651) 329-4070
www.bambuonline.com

Birchwood Café



Owner Tracy Singleton enthuses, "I always look forward to this night. The mood is one of generosity! There's a great energy. We're incredibly busy. Yet, all the customers are happy, and patient to wait for a table. I love it that we have had the same volunteer, [Ambassador Cheryl Schweitzer], every single year. She has so much fun greeting our

guests, and telling them about the event and The Aliveness Project." 3311 E. 25th St., Mpls.
(612) 722-4474
www.birchwoodcafe.com

Elsie's Restaurant, Bar, and Bowling Center



Event Planner Paula Compton points out that Elsie's will participate in all three meals: "It's a really good cause, and lets people know Elsie's is not just a bowling alley! We offer breakfast, lunch, and dinner; a full-service bar; and a banquet space for up to 180 guests. Add bowling, and we have it all! We are excited about the event, and hope it goes even better this year. 729 Marshall St. NE, Mpls.
(612) 378-9701
www.elsies.com

Toast Wine Bar and Café



Scott Davis, Guy in the Kitchen, reports that at Toast, Dining Out for Life has been popular, and, as other venues have found, some visitors become regulars. On one memorable Dining Out evening, he recalls, "Sven [Sundgaard] came in with his family, along with Miss Minnesota" Suggestions? Davis requests, "Please call for reservations. We've been filling up." 415 N. 1st St., Mpls.
(612) 333-4305
www.toastwinebarandcafe.com □

Photos: Meghan Doll Photography



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WORSHIP

by Reverend Greg Renstrom

EASTER REFLECTION



According to the New Testament, late one Sunday afternoon in the spring of the year, two of Jesus' followers were walking along a road to the little village of Emmaus. They were deeply discouraged. They had lost everything they valued two days earlier when he was killed.

Jesus once had promised that if anything happened to him, they shouldn't give up. "Keep going," he said. He would be back three days later. It was now the third day. (CH Dodd, *The Leader*, page 13)

Along the way to Emmaus, a Stranger joined them. It was Jesus. He was alive, miraculously raised from the dead. They experienced him on the road and that evening at dinner. And they continued to experience him, day after day: in Jerusalem, Galilee, Samaria, and everywhere they went.

Life didn't change because of Easter. Those early followers of Jesus still faced all the trouble that sometimes goes with life. That didn't change. But *they* ➡



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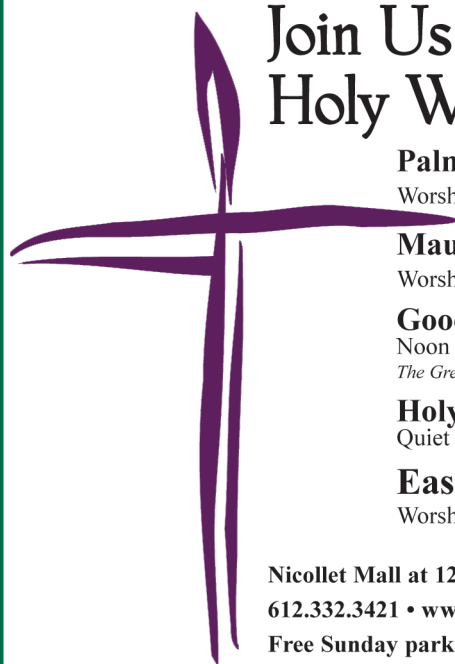
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Palm Sunday, April 17, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary.

++++

Maundy Thursday, April 21, Worship and Holy Communion.
12 noon in the Elizabeth Chapel.

7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary with the Office of Tenebrae.

++++

Good Friday, April 22, 12 noon Worship in the Elizabeth Chapel.
7:30 p.m. Vespers in the Sanctuary, Fauré Requiem, choir and orchestra.

++++

Easter Sunday, April 24

7:30 a.m. Worship in the Elizabeth Chapel, followed by breakfast.
9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Festive Worship in the Sanctuary, with organs and brass.

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changed. They found courage, hope, peace, and bliss. They found it in him. The Stranger stayed with them, and remained with them always.

St. Luke's version of the whole Eastertide story comes to a close with a magnificent line: "And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy!"

We would be amazed if they didn't.

That brief Biblical vignette still reveals the meaning of Easter for Jesus' modern-day followers. It "doesn't take away all of life's problems, or brush aside all of life's pain." It doesn't change that.

But Easter still changes people. Wherever and whenever people experience the Stranger among us—and they still do in churches, chapels, and cathedrals; in hospital rooms, living rooms, classrooms, boardrooms, and prison cells; beside lakes, alongside roads, on sidewalks, and at dinner tables—they still find courage, hope, peace, and bliss. It is the reason why we keep going. It is still the third day. (CH Dodd, *The Leader*, page 19) □

Reverend Greg Renstrom is Minister at Wesley congregation in Minneapolis.

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Sunrise Holy Communion

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April 21 • Maundy Thursday Services
5:45 pm (child-friendly) & 7:15 pm

April 22 • Good Friday Services
5:45 pm (child-friendly) & 7:15 pm

April 23 • Great Vigil of Easter
6:00 pm

April 24 • Easter Sunday Services
8:00 am, 9:30 am, & 11:00 am

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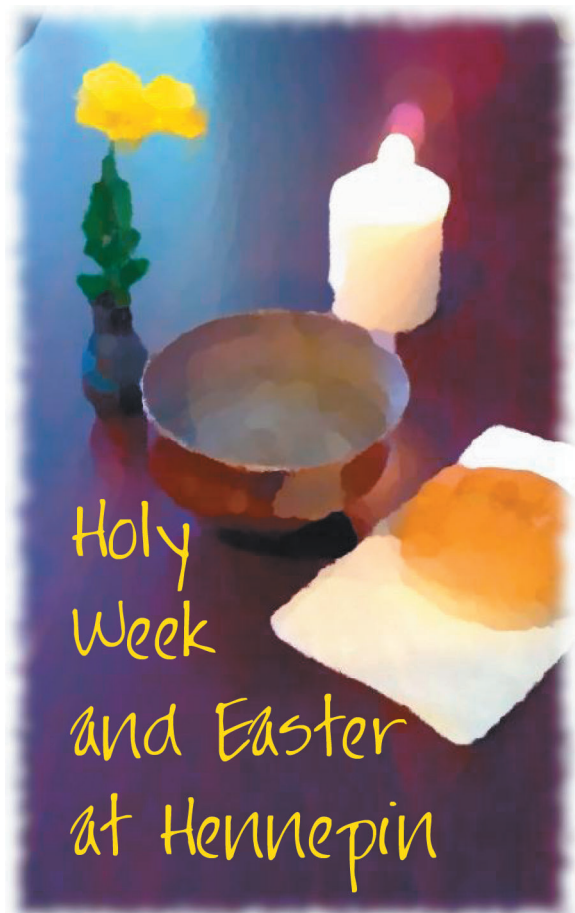
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Worship at 7:00 PM

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 22
Worship at 12:00 Noon and 7:00 PM

EASTER DAY, APRIL 24
Sunrise Worship at 7:00 AM
Festival Services at
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OutFront Minnesota Coordinates Lobby Day for LGBT Equality

Several thousand are expected to participate in this annual event that connects constituents with legislators to further GLBT equality.

DURING LOBBY DAY for LGBT Equality on April 14 at the State Capitol in St. Paul, OutFront Minnesota will facilitate meetings between state legislators and their constituents to promote GLBT rights, while motivating the GLBT community and its supporters to get involved and be heard.

Monica Meyer, who began with OutFront Minnesota as Public Policy Director in 2001, and became Executive Director in 2010, says, "What Lobby Day does is that it really helps us let legislators, elected officials who make decisions on policies, know that people in their district support equality."

Through Lobby Day, Meyer adds, OutFront Minnesota aims to influence debate, and raise awareness of GLBT issues in the Minnesota Legislature.

Meyer notes that OutFront Minnesota hopes to rouse the GLBT community and its supporters to be active, while giving them the information to do so.

As Meyer explains, "We're really trying to connect with Minnesotans, and get them on board with supporting equality, and then to make sure they have the tools and the local connections to be engaged and involved."

Workshops in the morning will address bullying in Minnesota schools, as well as what can be done to prevent a constitutional amendment that would prohibit same-sex marriage, further restricting GLBT rights.

Meyer states that Lobby Day relates to one of OutFront Minnesota's primary goals:

to rally support for GLBT equality.

As Meyer points out, 2010 election results stimulated another objective for Lobby Day: "This year, the opportunity and the challenge are that we have a bunch of new legislators. We really have an opportunity to make sure that our new elected officials are learning from their constituents about LGBT issues."

Presently, 23 Senate members and 36 House members are in their first term, according to the 2010 *Election Directory* of the 2011-2012 Minnesota Legislature.

Several speakers at the Lobby Day rally will tell their story, and encourage support for GLBT equality and legislation, including Safe Schools for All, introduced by Minnesota State Senator Scott Dibble. It would require schools to adopt policies against bullying and harassment of students based on race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

Lobby Day speaker Alyssa Veil, a high school senior, and winner of the 2011 Paul A. Anderson Award for Youth Leadership, expresses her desire to influence students and others to demand a safe educational environment.

As Veil relates, "The power of speaking is really one of the most persuasive ways to change people, as long as they are listening."

Veil met Sean Simonson, another Lobby Day speaker, at OutFront Minnesota's Freedom to Marry Day rally in February. Simonson, a senior at Benilde-St. Margaret in St. Louis Park, wrote a controversial es-

say, "Life as a gay teenager," for the Catholic school's newspaper, *Knight Errant*, that he later was asked to take down from the publication's website.

Simonson and Veil joined forces to draw out the student voice in a debate that, the latter recounts, often is dominated by adults, with a petition to pass Safe Schools for All.

Veil remarks, "We're doing what we can. Doing something is going to make a change no matter what."

Meyer, who believes people need to stand up and be recognized by their representatives to help get rid of GLBT discrimination in Minnesota and its laws, asserts, "If we are really going to be able change our state, we need thousands and thousands of people who are actively working to do that."

OutFront Minnesota, originally called the Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, began in 1987 with a mission "to make our home a place where GLBT Minnesotans have the freedom, power and confidence to make the best choice for their own lives."

According to Meyer, Lobby Day helps achieve this vision.

In past years, Lobby Day has attracted about 2,000 people from the GLBT community and other supporters. Coaches will lead the meetings between constituents and legislators. More than 150 volunteers will help make the day run as smoothly as possible.

For more information and registration, visit www.outfront.org/lobbyday. □



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WWE Partners With GLAAD Over Wrestler's Antigay Tirade

Following antigay statements by wrestler John Cena, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) announced that it is partnering with the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) to create and promote an antibullying initiative aimed at the young men who make up the organization's core audience.

Fort Worth Pays in Gay Bar Raid

The Houston Chronicle reports that the Fort Worth City Council approved a \$400,000 settlement with Chad Gibson, who claimed he was the victim of excessive force by Fort Worth Police and the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission

during a controversial 2009 raid on a local gay bar.

Harassed Dutch Gay Couple Sues Authorities

According to Radio Netherlands, a gay couple is suing the Dutch city of Utrecht for failing to protect them from continual vandalism and harassment. They say authorities didn't take adequate action following the couple's eight police reports going back to 2009.

Maryland Gay Marriage Bill Dies with No Final Vote

The Associated Press reports that Maryland's House failed to pass same-sex legislation after Democratic legislators were unable to garner enough votes to overcome opposition by Republicans and religious groups.

Maupin Shocked at Aussie "Real Men" Jibe

According to Agence France-Presse, author and activist Armistead Maupin said he was shocked after a bartender in Australia told Maupin's partner that the men's restroom was "reserved for real men." The couple was at Bo-jangles restaurant in Alice Springs, Australia, when Christopher Turner, who married Maupin in 2007, was refused entry to the restroom.

Outed City Council Candidate Outs Rival

The Montrose Patch reports that Glendale, California, City Council candidate Mike Mohill revealed that he previously was arrested for having gay sex in public. Mohill, who has been married to his wife since 1977, says he is a happily-married

gay man. He then went on to state that his opponent, John Drayman, is "reputed to be gay himself."

US Senate Hearing for Gay Judicial Nominee

According to United Press International, US Senator Chuck Schumer presided over a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing for openly-gay federal judge candidate J. Paul Oetken. Schumer said he was "shocked" that no openly-gay men currently are serving as federal judges in the United States.

Straight New York Teen Killed by Attackers Yelling Antigay Slurs

Gothamist reports that 18-year-old Anthony Collao, who was not gay, was beaten and stomped to death by four men allegedly yelling antigay slurs during the attack, which took place at a birthday party thrown by two gay men in New York City. The teens have been arraigned on charges of manslaughter and assault.

Isle of Man Gay Couples Get Right to Civil Partnerships

According to the BBC, gay couples on the Isle of Man have received the right to enter into civil partnerships. The new law was signed by the country's parliament. The Isle of Man is a self-governing British Crown Dependency, located between the United Kingdom and Ireland. The new legislation grants same-sex couples the same rights as married couples in matters of inheritance, pensions and tax allowances.



Dr. Gary Remafedi. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

Remafedi Says "Gay Cure" App Misinterprets His Research

PCMag.com reports that Dr. Gary Remafedi, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota, and Director of the Youth and AIDS Project, claims his research was misinterpreted in an Apple iPhone app by the antigay organization Exodus International. He sent a letter to Apple demanding that the so-called "gay cure" app be removed, saying it "erroneously cites my research in support of claims that homosexuality can be changed....Associating my work with that of the ex-gay ministry and other unfounded treatments is professionally injurious and grievous." Exodus International responded to controversy over the app by stating, "In no way, shape, or form is our message about trying to cure, or do we try to promote that type of methodology or message. Really, the point of the application is to provide the material that is also on our website in smartphone format...." Apple since has pulled the app from the app store. □



Are you getting ready to start taking HIV medications?

Researchers from the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of Minnesota are looking for HIV+ and HIV- people to participate in research studies.

The aim of these studies is to find out why HIV persists and can't be cured with HIV drugs.

You do not need to be on HIV drugs to qualify.

Several opportunities are available and depending upon the study, you may be started on HIV drugs or your current drug regimen may be adjusted. Compensation and time requirements vary based on the study for which you may qualify.

If you are interested in participating, have any questions, or would like more information about current studies, visit **www.hiv.umn.edu** or call **612-625-7472**



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Elizabeth Taylor

Diva, Dame, Saint

The beloved actress took a risk in championing HIV/AIDS activism a quarter-century ago during the conservative Reagan Era.

Elizabeth Taylor was more than an icon to the gay community. She was truly a living saint. Her tireless, pioneering, oft-unfashionable work in the fight against the worldwide HIV/AIDS epidemic was quite remarkable and beyond inspirational. Here's a look at her contributions over the past quarter-century.

1985

Taylor begins a partnership with the AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), and with the help of her publicist, Chen Sam, organizes its inaugural Commitment to Life fundraiser, which brings in \$1.3 million.

"I remember complaining, 'Why isn't anybody doing anything? Why isn't anyone raising money?' And it struck me like lightning: 'Wait a second, I'm not doing anything.'"

1985

Taylor and Dr. Michael Gottlieb found the National AIDS Research Foundation. The organization merges with the AIDS Medical Foundation to become amfAR. Since its creation, amfAR has invested nearly \$325 million into research.

"Celebrity is not something that comes without responsibility....If I can help further a worthwhile cause simply by lending my voice, I feel that it is my place to do so."

1986

Taylor testifies before Congress on behalf of the Ryan White bill, begging for a funding increase for emergency care in areas hardest-hit by the AIDS epidemic.

1989

Taylor travels to Thailand, where AIDS was beginning to take a heavy toll. She is photographed shaking hands with a person with AIDS in a Bangkok hospital. The photograph, distributed worldwide, helps counter the stigma of the disease.

"I decided that with my name, I could open certain doors, that I was a commodity in myself—and I'm not talking as an actress. I could take the fame I'd resented, and tried to get away from for so many years—but you can never get away from it—and use it to do some good. I wanted to retire, but the tabloids wouldn't let me. So I thought, 'If you're going to screw me over, I'll use you.'"

1990

Taylor testifies before Congress, urging passage of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act of 1990. The act becomes law, ensuring that low-income, uninsured, and underinsured people living with HIV/AIDS have access to treatment.

"I don't think President [George H.W.] Bush is doing anything at all about AIDS.... In fact, I'm not even sure if he knows how to spell 'AIDS.'"

1991

Taylor founds the The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation (ETAF) to help provide much-needed support services for people living with HIV/AIDS and prevention education for at-risk communities. She personally underwrites all expenses for raising and administering the foundation's funds.

1993

The Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center is built and named in Taylor's honor at the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, DC, to provide HIV/AIDS testing and services free-of-charge.

1993

Taylor receives the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for her HIV/AIDS work.

2000

Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain names Taylor a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in honor of her contribution to film and her fight against HIV/AIDS.

2005

The Elizabeth Taylor Endowment Fund for the UCLA Clinical AIDS Research and Education (CARE) Center is established at the University of California Los Angeles.

"It's still out there. It is still a pandemic. It has not slowed down. I know people have forgotten. They take things for granted—especially the young people."

2007

Taylor and actor James Earl Jones give a benefit performance of the play *Love Letters* that raises \$1 million for ETAF.

"Just giving the use of your name doesn't really mean anything. You have to be physically involved, be a participant, and show up and make yourself a part of the organization." ■

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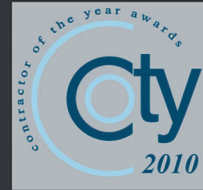
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Photo by Rich Ryan

Next Fall Centers on Gay Love Story

IF YOU'RE A GLBT person interested in having relationships work with people different than you, then make a beeline to the Jungle Theater, where playwright Geoffrey Naufft's *Next Fall*—a Broadway hit in 2009—now enjoys its first area production. The Broadway staging, presented by Sir Elton John and his life partner, David Furnish, was Tony-nominated for Best Play.

Next Fall explores the gay love story of Luke (Neal Skoy), a fundamentalist Christian, and Adam (Garry Geikken), an atheist. Luke never has come out to his family. So, when fate brings his relatives into the picture, a lot that was hidden for his gay relationship's five-year duration surfaces.

Much has been said of *Next Fall*'s famous breakfast conversation scene.

Director Joel Sass explains, "After their first romantic night the couple enjoys together, it's, like, oh, God! It's the most wonderful honeymoon! But then, they have this little conversation where Adam questions

Luke: 'Well, if you're gay and a Christian, how do you reconcile that?'

"And that leads to a discussion about atonement and belief where Adam poses a very difficult question to Luke, who is very steadfast in his Christian ideology: 'If all you've got to do if you've sinned is ask for forgiveness, and then you'll go to heaven, then what does it mean if, say, Matthew Shepard is killed before he has 'atoned,' but his murderers do ['atone,' and go to heaven]? Does that mean Matthew Shepard is burning in hell? And his murderers have gone to heaven?'"

Sass continues, "And by the strict letter of Luke's theology, that answer has to be 'yes.' Yet, he's not happy with what his faith would have him say. And it's written so that it's brought up in such a way that the audience is involved in that question, too."

Skoy feels that Luke's Christianity "is the absolute center of his being—that and his homosexuality. Luke has 'accepted

Christ,' and believes that his faithfulness is enough to deliver him from evil. He doesn't go around quoting scriptures, but he truly believes. But under his whole perspective is a bit of guilt. He sees being gay as a sin, but he doesn't run from the fact that he is gay. I found that to be admirable."

Geikken observes, "Adam is a worrier, and more than a little neurotic. And the issue is certainly not tidily resolved in the play, which is very much as it should be. One of the great things about this script is its 'equal time empathy.' I think whatever one's personal beliefs, they will be surprised at the lack of heroes and villains with respect to the issues raised." □

Next Fall

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Broke-ology. Photo by Michal Daniel

Broke-ology • Through Apr. 10 • Pillsbury House Theatre • 3501 Chicago Ave. S., Mpls. • (612) 825-0459 • www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org — James Craven is one of Minnesota's best actors, and in Nathan Louis Jackson's drama, he gives one of his best performances ever. Directed by James Williams, Craven plays a blue-collar retiree tormented by bodily deterioration and the death of his wife, sweetly portrayed in dream sequences by Sonja Parks. Mikell Sapp and Darious Dotch endear as his sons. When one of them lets the N-word slip, he continuously must repeat, "I Love Black People!"



American as Curry Pie. Photo by Scott Pakudaitis

American as Curry Pie • Through Apr. 10 • History Theatre • 30 E. 10th St., St. Paul • (651) 292-4323 • www.historytheatre.com — In this wonderful autobiographical solo portrayal, writer-performer Aamera Siddiqui dispels the xenophobic stereotype that Muslim Americans are fanatics lacking in diversity of theological and social overviews. We see a little girl caught between strict Muslim parents and the Christian exceptionalism of her playmates. The account of bureaucratic madness that immigration authorities dealt her family is wrenching. Siddiqui's sexual liberation, while maintaining her Muslim faith in new terms, is remarkable.

The Marvelous Wonderettes • Through July 24 • Plymouth Playhouse • 2705 Annapolis Ln. N., Plymouth • (763) 553-1600 • www.plymouthplayhouse.com — Ever since the film *American Graffiti* (1973) was released, Mid-20th-Century nostalgia has been a national addiction. Plymouth Playhouse injects us with a dreamy dose of the kind of reassuring theater you can take your Tea Party Christian relatives to. Delightful vocals capture the cheesy style we all have come to know so well. When Act Two flashes forward to the 1960s, you won't be bothered by any references to assassinations, Vietnam, or dead soldiers!



The Marvelous Wonderettes. Photo by Paul Nixdorf

Murderess • Through Apr. 10 • Lowry Lab, • 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul • (612) 721-1186 • www.theatreunbound.com — Engaging monologues embody six American women who committed murder in the 19th and Early-20th Centuries. Playwright Anne Bertram, who draws from historical sources to penetrate the criminal psychology of each, occasionally gets a bit too wordy and cerebral. Though all six actresses find the mystery, dark wit, and pathos within, murderous actions are not excused. Production supervisor Miriam Monasch has fostered a palpably oppressive atmosphere, perfectly suiting the show's puritanical period. ➔

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[THEATER]



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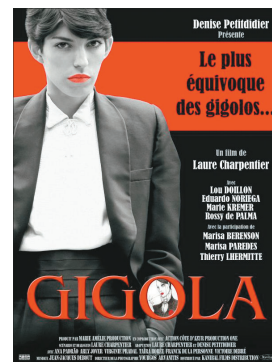
BLOODYMERRYJAMMYPARTY • Through Apr. 16 • Blank Slate Theatre • 499 Wacouta St., St. Paul • (612) 481-2234 • www.blankslatetheatre.com — Heidi Arneson ruled as the Twin Cities Queen of Solo Performance in the 1990s. Her comic inquiries into adolescent angst were wildly popular. Now, Blank Slate Theatre has transformed the trademark Arneson 1972 slumber party into a full-length play.

Director Adam Arnold says, “I never got to see Heidi’s jammy-party solo work, but *Bloodymerryjammyparty* at Blank Slate is uniquely powerful, because the seven teenage girls attending the jammy party are being played by actual girls in their teens. It has given birth to genuine, organic expression of adolescence with its challenges and beauties. And it has allowed our young actors a rich forum for processing some important topics.”

Of course, Arneson’s pansexual world includes a lesbian, here played by teenager Kendall Kent, who shares, “I consider Sheri to be like any other average young girl, regardless of location or decade. She is facing confusion and denial about who she really is. Not at all is she frozen by her attraction to women. It does not define her. It is a part of her, undeniably. She is complex, worthy, and equivalent to any other person in this world.”

Arneson, who was astonished to see her characters embodied by other actors, remarks, “The work expands beyond me. The sense of letting go is not a sense of loss, but a sensation of building the invisible tendrils that connect me to a new community of artists. The new play, with added characters, and new music by Alberta Mirais and Ian Boswell, carries more arcs and more issues than I was able to investigate in my solo work.”

[Film]



Courtesy of MSP International Film Festival

BEGINNERS • GIGOLA • MSP International Film Festival • Apr. 14-May 5 • St. Anthony Main Theatre • 115 Main St. SE, Mpls. • (612) 331-7563

• www.mspfilmsociety.org — Legendary stars like Christopher Plummer (*The Sound of Music*) and Ewan McGregor (*The Ghost Writer*) appear in a gay-themed indie film. *Beginners* is American director Mike Mills’s semiautobiographical take on a man coming out at age 75!

In director Laure Chaperot’s magnetic *Gigola*, you’ll see rich elderly women picking up drag kings in a Paris nightclub circa 1963. In an illusion-shattering lead performance, Lou Doillon plays a beguiling butch lesbian who treats her women like crap. She even has one of her rich elderly clients grovel in public. Astonishing!

[Opera]

WUTHERING HEIGHTS: THE OPERA • Apr. 16-23 • Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
345 Washington St., St. Paul • (612) 333-6669 • www.mnopera.org

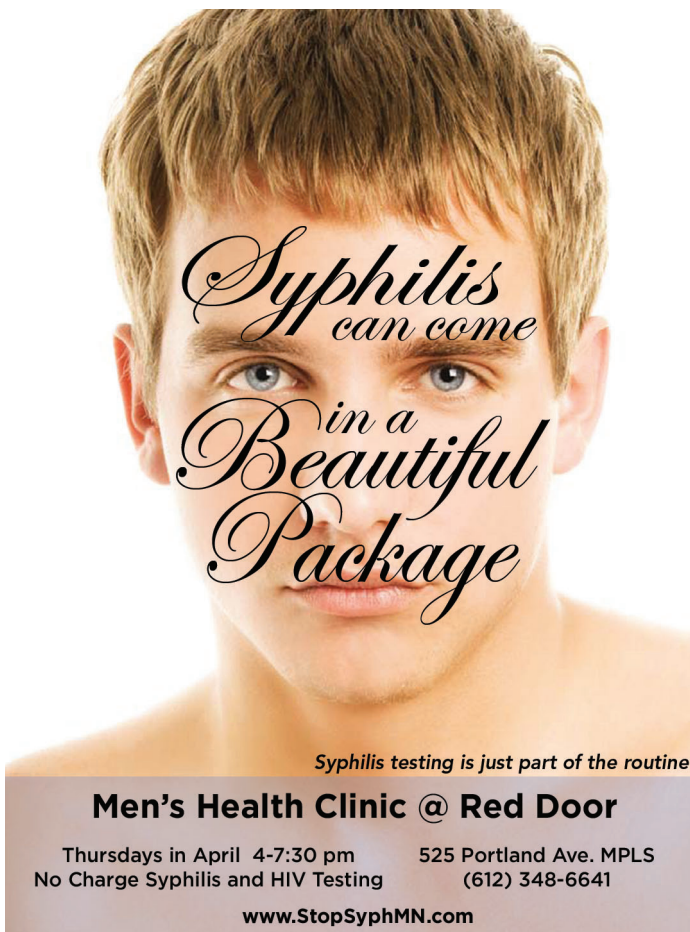
Minnesota Opera presents a rare revival of film composer Bernard Herrmann’s operatic version of Emily Bronte’s 1847 novel. Lee Poulis and Sara Jakubiak play the passionate romantic leads.

Director Eric Simonson believes “the cruelty that Heathcliff and Cathy impart on one another is part and parcel of their love, which is mercurial, and like the nature that surrounds them—cruel, beautiful, unpredictable, sometimes violent, sometimes calm, and always awesome.”

Of Herrmann, conductor Michael Christie notes, “Dramatic, repeated orchestral outbursts followed by a soaring outflow of intensely-felt melody is something one can count on with his music.”



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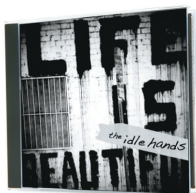
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Collapse into Now **R.E.M.**

R.E.M. has been going strong for three decades, and I've been along for nearly the entire ride. Since the end of the band's heyday in the mid-1990s, my interest has waxed and waned, but their latest draws my interest once again. Lots of middle-aged bands just go through the motions every few years, but Michael Stipe and company still are working hard. His voice is the easiest element to take note of, but I always have loved the interplay between Peter Buck and Mike Mills. Their moody, rocking folk style fuels the music here, outshining the occasional guest (Eddie Vedder, Patti Smith, and Peaches), and neatly turning back the clock to the band I loved in my youth.



Life is Beautiful **IDLE HAND**

The local rockers follow their debut with a five-track teaser that has me begging for more. Behind propulsive backbeats, catchy verses, and glammed-out choruses, the Idle Hands bring the distorted noise throughout this all-too-brief set. The clattering begins with "Socialite Death Squad," which has the punk edge and energy you might expect from the song, but a glorious pop chorus brightens it up. "Uptown is Burning" sounds a bit like a lost, propulsive, late-period Suburbs song. Elsewhere, the band dives into different tempos (the languid Blur-like "Just Stop"); stuttering indie rock ("Dead Letter"); and grandly-realized pop perfection ("Fine"). *Life is Beautiful* doesn't last much more than 20 minutes, but they're the best so far in 2011.



The Most Incredible Thing **PET SHOP BOYS**

The Most Incredible Thing isn't truly a new Pet Shop Boys album, but it's as close as we're likely to hear for some time. The double disc is the accompanying music to a new ballet by Javier de Frutos that debuted in March. Based on Hans Christian Andersen's folktale, the piece makes for an intriguing listen, but it's hard to judge without seeing the dances. Some of the more overt parts of the story can be heard in the mostly-instrumental score. Otherwise, the music features a lot of sweep. You certainly can dance to good chunks of it—this is a ballet, after all—but you truly need to see the visuals for it to come to life.



Reptilians **STARFUCKER**

It's a bad name for a band. On their second album, Starfucker continue to make beautiful, if fractured, music together. The electronic pulse fueling the band could be from any number of 1980s synth-pop acts, but they add a homemade, off-key, 2000s layer to the proceedings—sometimes sounding like an inquisitive 8-year-old has found his older brother's keyboards, and is making an extra racket while listening to the Human League. The main weakness here comes from Hodges's vocals, which are far too distant and shy for such aggressive pop music. The Depeche Mode-like "Julius" desperately needs a Dave Gahan-like vocalist to give the tune its needed swagger (maybe that's because the band's name reminds me of the Rolling Stones). □



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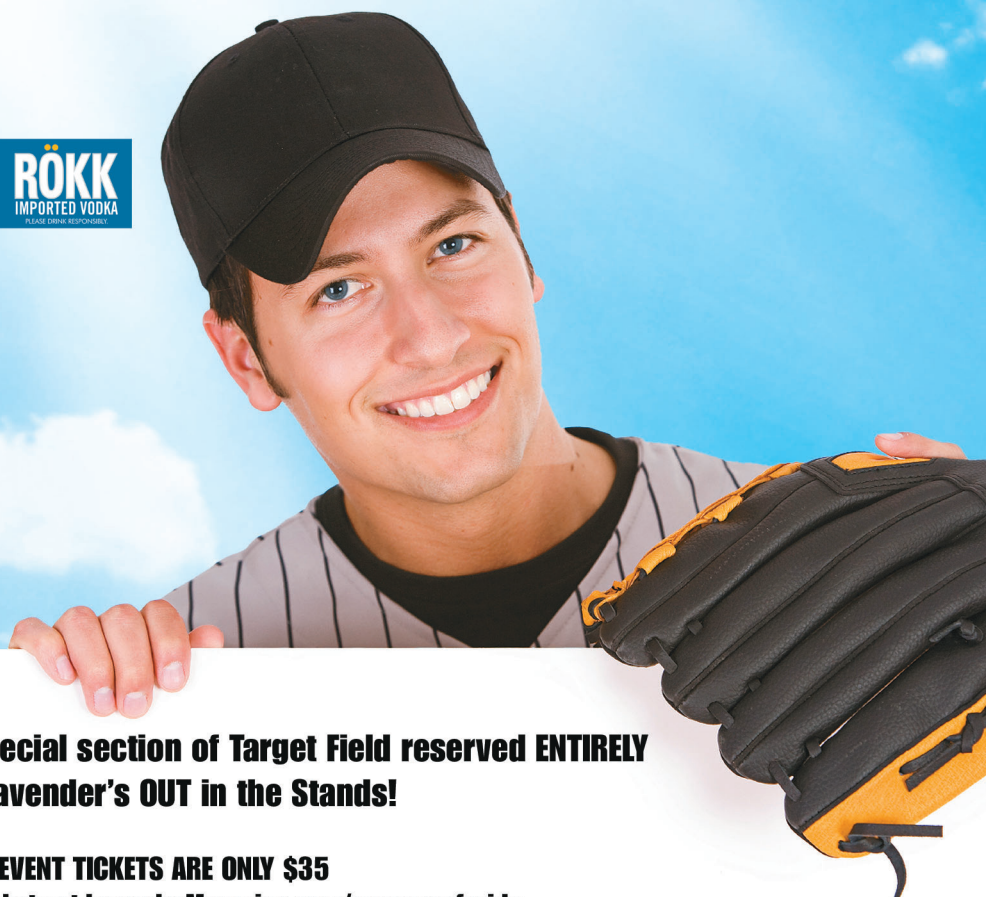
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OUT
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APRIL

The Marvelous Wondrettes. Photo by Paul Nixdorf



Broke-ology. Photo by Michal Daniel



Next Fall. Photo by Rich Ryan



Fusion
Photo by Eric Saulitis

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

Note: This calendar includes events formerly in the Bar Calendar.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7
Pet Project Rescue Third Annual Fundraiser. 5-8 PM. Summit Brewing Company, 910 Montreal Cir., St. Paul. (612) 735-0186. <www.petprojectrescue.com>.

University of Minnesota School of Music University Opera Theatre: Die Fledermaus. Through Apr. 10. Ted Mann Concert Hall, 2128 4th St. S., Mpls. (612) 624-2345. <www.opera.umn.edu>.

FRIDAY, APRIL 8
YOLO. 9 PM. Town House, 1415 University Ave. W., St. Paul. (651) 646-7087. <www.townhousebar.com>.

James Sewell Ballet & The Schubert Club: Fusion. Through

Apr. 17. The O'Shaughnessy at St. Catherine University, 2004 Randolph Ave., St. Paul. (651) 690-6700. <www.ticketmaster.com>.

Next Fall. Through May 22. Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls (612) 822-7063. <www.jungletheater.com>.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9
Twin Cities Pool League Year-End Tournament. Noon-5 PM. Town House, 1415 University Ave. W., St. Paul. (651) 646-7087. <www.townhousebar.com>.

North Star Gay Rodeo Association Dance. 8 PM-12:30 AM. James Ballentine VFW, 2916 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls. <www.nsgra.org>.

TNT Show. 9 PM. Town House, 1415 University Ave. W., St. Paul. (651) 646-

7087. <www.townhousebar.com>.

Out to Brunch Outing to Minnesota Alpaca Show. (952) 239-0649. <www.outtobrunch.org>.

SUNDAY, APRIL 10
Jazz At The Jungle: Connie Evingson's No More Blues. 4 PM & 7:30 PM. Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 822-7063. <www.jungletheater.com>.

Metropolitan State Hosts Global Food, Fashion and Awards Celebration. Noon-3 PM. Midtown Global Market, 920 E. Lake St., Mpls.

MONDAY, APRIL 11
Naked Darrow. Through Apr. 17. Park Square Theatre, 20 W. 7th Place, St. Paul. (651) 291-7005. <www.parksquaretheatre.org>.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13
Fundraiser To Send Nina DiAngelo to Compete in All-American Goddess 2011 Contest. 9:30 PM. Gay 90's, 408 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-7755. <www.gay90s.com>.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14
Lobby Day for LGBT Equality. Rally @ Noon. Lobbying All Day. State Capitol, St. Paul. (612) 822-0127. <www.outfrontmn.org/lobbyday>.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15
Dragged Out. 9:30 PM. Town House, 1415 University Ave. W., St. Paul. (651) 646-7087. <www.townhousebar.com>.

VIP Launch Party. 7-9 PM. Gay 90's, 408 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-7755. <www.gay90s.com>.

CALENDAR



Three Viewing. Photo by Lauren B. Photography



Avenue Q. Photo by Rich Ryan

Tutankhamun. Photo by Sandro Vannini



14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 29 30

Foam Party. Gay 90's, 408 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-7755. <www.gay90s.com>.

Ten Thousand Things: *Man of La Mancha*. Through Apr. 17. Minnesota Opera Center, 620 N. 1st St., Mpls. (800) 838-3006. <www.tenthousandthings.org>.

Three Viewings. Through May 14. Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 339-4944. <www.illusiontheater.org>.

SATURDAY, APRIL 16
Third Annual Thumper Hunt. Benefits The Black Guard Black Frost 35th Anniversary. 3-7 PM. Gay 90's, 408 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. <www.blackguard.org>.

Imperial Court of Minnesota Prince Royale and Princess Royale Ball: Dinner & Show. 5:30 PM. Gay 90's, 408

Hennepin Ave., Mpls. <www.impcourtmn.com>.

Minnesota Freedom Band: *Spring into Classics*. 7 PM. University Baptist Church, 1219 University Ave. SE, Mpls. (612) 360-4031. <www.mnfreedomband.org>.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23
Old Timers Party. 4-7 PM. Town House, 1415 University Ave. W., St. Paul. (651) 646-7087. <www.townhousebar.com>.

ONGOING
Avenue Q. Through May 1. Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S. 4th St., Mpls. (612) 338-6131. <www.mixedblood.com>.

Broke-ology. Through Apr. 10. Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 825-0459. <www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org>.

Dinner with the Tsars: *Imperial Russian Porcelain*. Through Aug. 7. The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 821-9045. <www.tmora.org>.

Hamlet. Through Apr. 17. Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-3010. <www.TheatreintheRound.org>.

It's Women's Work. Through Apr. 23. Open Eye Figure Theatre, 506 E. 24th St., Mpls. (612) 874-6338. <www.openeyetheatre.org>.

The Marvelous Wondrettes. Through July 24. Plymouth Playhouse, 2705 Annapolis Ln. N., Plymouth. (763) 553-1600. <www.plymouthplayhouse.com>.

Shades of Red: *The Evolution of Early Soviet Art*. Through Sept 15. The Mu-

seum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 821-9045. <www.tmora.org>.

To Kill A Mockingbird. Through Apr. 17. Park Square Theatre, 20 W. 7th Pl., St. Paul. (651) 291-7005. <www.parksquaretheatre.org>.

Tutankhamun: *The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs*. Through Sept. 5. Science Museum of Minnesota, 120 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul. (651) 221-9444. <www.smm.org>.

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Old Timers Party • Sat., Apr. 23

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Events formerly in the Bar Calendar now are included in the Calendar on pages 34-35.

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AMICI

Gay-Owned Neighborhood Gem Serves Awesome Italian Cuisine

Neighborhood restaurants don't always get the love they deserve from the press, and I suppose I understand why. They usually don't offer the kind of razzle-dazzle that the media rewards.

However, of all the restaurants I have covered, it is usually those little neighborhood gems that I recommend for the most common question I get asked: "Please, Heidi, I want to be able to wear jeans, enjoy good food and wine,

carry on a conversation without shouting—and I want it all on a budget. Do you know a place like that?” Indeed I do, so if you read my restaurant reviews regularly, you know I can suggest several such places. And, let’s hope, so should you.

The newest restaurant on that hot little list would be Amici. It isn’t far from Downtown, in Northeast Minneapolis near The Quarry shopping center. A few ethnic restaurants are around, but nothing else nearby offers anything similar to Amici’s bistro-style menu.

For its neighborhood, the restaurant’s arrival a little more than a year ago has been very welcome. The menu changes quarterly, and a robust selection of daily specials also keeps things interesting for regular patrons.

Amici is a casual, streamlined little space. A couple of flat-screen TVs can be used for special events, like the Super Bowl or the Academy Awards, but normally, they are tuned to Turner Classic Movies with the sound down. TVs can be terribly distracting, but here, they function more like conversation pieces and laid-back ambience.

In fact, the restaurant is so conducive to conversation that I had to keep reminding myself to concentrate on the menu, and make some tough decisions. The specials were particularly tempting—and our server assured us that they are reliably good—but if I ordered the special crab cake appetizer *and* the special prawns, only to neglect the regular pizza list, I would have been a very naughty food writer indeed.

My dining companion and I chose to go with the Baked Goat Cheese (\$8) to start. Though the crab cakes will remain a mystery, I did not regret it. The tangy goat cheese was melted but not *molten*, topped with toasted chopped almonds, and served with a delightfully-demure grape compote, arugula, and crostini. The overall combination was addictive, yet I can’t help but focus on a small detail: the crostini. So many kitchens can’t get it right, but here, the bread is toasted to that wonderful sweet spot where you get a very satisfying crunch, but the crostini doesn’t shatter the minute you bite into it.

With the goat cheese, our server recommended the food-friendly Terrazas malbec (\$8.50/\$32). I have gotten myself into a bit of a malbec rut of late, but in my defense, it is so malleable that I don’t really mind the habit. If malbec isn’t your wine of choice,



(Facing page, from left) Seasonal Pizza; Dining area. (This page, clockwise from upper left) Orecchiette Pasta, Blueberry Tiramisu, Beet Salad. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

Toasted Head Untamed Red (\$7.50/\$28) also is medium-bodied, but darker, and more exotic on the tongue.

The Amici beer and wine list, which is spartan but varied, still manages to offer two sparkling wine options for special occasions. If your schedule allows, try heading to the restaurant for the first time on a Wednesday evening, when bottles of wine are half-price.

The promised Prawns (\$20) arrived—fat, perky, and served over olive and caper couscous that is surprisingly sexy. Couscous easily could be an afterthought—and so often is—but the Amici chef really likes to play with food, while respecting each ingredient.

Amici’s thin-crust Seasonal Pizza (\$12/\$21), topped with pulled pork, smoked fresh mozzarella, spicy tomato sauce, arugula, and pickled onions, is quite unique, too. I’m not a fan of the usual barbeque pizza, but the spicy tomato sauce, peppery arugula, and pickled onions balanced the subtly sweet pulled pork. The thin, chewy crust had just enough bite—yet another pleasant surprise.

I confess that I had my eyes on the Flourless Chocolate Cake with salted caramel ice cream for dessert, but after a brief consulta-



tion with the kitchen, our server steered us toward the luscious Blueberry Tiramisu instead. Note: When your server points you so strongly in a particular direction, say yes! The tiramisu was rich, delicate, and not overly sweet. I was especially taken with it, so much so that I took the last remaining bit home.

Amici is very kid-friendly, and offers a special menu section to please the under-10 crowd.

Snap! and Pop! both having closed, I am very glad to see such a well-rounded restaurant pick up the torch. I hear that eager customers were lined up the day Amici opened. It seems the chef has the versatility to keep the neighborhood happy for years to come. □

Amici
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[**WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM**] by Carla Waldemar

OK, admit it: You love—love!—red meat. But every time you so much as think about a big, thick, juicy beefsteak, the health police are on your case. Well, maybe it's time to try the "other" red meat: buffalo (AKA bison—one and the same on the plate).

Our original Minnesotans, the Sioux, once lived where the buffalo roamed, and that meat carried them through a long, cold winter. Works today, too.

They were onto something. Grill it, stew it, fry it, even serve it tartare, and man, it's tasty. As bonus points, buffalo boasts immense health benefits. Compared with beef, pork, or even shrimp and skinless chicken, for God's sake, it's lower in cholesterol, calories, and fat.

In fact, in cooking beef, you piously trim off those hunks of fat, and then drain more from the pan. In other words, you're tossing in the garbage stuff you paid for.

Not so with buffalo, because it's almost pure protein—no waste. That means it doesn't shrink in cooking, either, so you get every ounce you paid for.

Plus, buffalo is raised right here in Minnesota, another bonus for us locovores. Our state boasts more than 200 buffalo producers, ranking us number two in the nation.

These brawny beasts spend their days eating grass, just like they always did, which means they're not pumped up with additives and chemicals.



Want to test-drive before cooking it in your own kitchen? Here are several dining homes where buffalo roam:

Common Roots Last year's big hit was a bison-wild rice meatloaf. This season, it's Bourbon-marinated bison steak, served with cauliflower gratin, crispy leeks, and blood orange reduction, abetted by more Bourbon in the pan jus.

French Meadow The menu features bison, this time topping housemade papardelle noodles, Provençal-style, along with green olives, arugula, and Parmesan.

Hell's Kitchen Ever since it opened, this café has served its signature bison Benedict,

a regional remake of the classic, calling on char-grilled bison flank steak topped with poached eggs and a snappy tangerine-jalapeño hollandaise, all piled atop multigrain toast.

Mystic Lake Casino Going back to their roots, the Sioux who run this casino offer a bison burger at the Little Six and Tipi restaurants, and feature it seasonally on the buffet line, using meat raised by a tribal member. Worth the gamble!

Urban Eatery In the Calhoun Beach Club's new establishment, look for a dynamite bison pot roast, livened with sweet potato mash and curried chickpeas. □



Photo Courtesy of Tangletown Gardens

[**Tangletown Gardens Owners Launch Wise Acre Eatery**]

→ In May, Scott Endres and Dean Engelmann, owners of Tangletown Gardens, will open Wise Acre Eatery across the street in the former Liberty Frozen Custard location, 5401 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis. It's set to be the neighborhood place for eating fresh, sustainably-grown food arriving direct from the Tangletown Gardens farm in Plato, Minnesota.

Endres says, "It's the ultimate farm-to-table eating experience. We will be the folks sowing the seeds, nurturing plants, and tending the animals in the morning, then delivering the harvest to our restaurant's kitchen and market in the afternoon. It just doesn't get any more local than that."

For more information, visit <www.tangletowngardens.com>. □

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Talking to Strangers

I REALLY, REALLY like meeting new people. Guys, girls, straight, gay, old, young, rich, poor—you name it. It might be my favorite thing to do in the whole world. Except for hanging with friends. And going out. And going out on dates. And cuddling. And, er (blush), chicken fried rice.

Anyway, yeah, so meeting new people is *one* of my favorite things. I wanted to meet you here today for that very reason. More on that in a second. First, a little bit about your fabulously-flawed-yet-all-around-nice friend from the South....

When I'm out on the town playing with my friends, and someone catches my eye, I approach him. I do it in a variety of ways, and I'm met with varying degrees of success.

Meeting new people isn't always easy. There's an art, maybe a shamelessness, to extending your hand to a total stranger, and I'm by no means a social artist. I know just enough to get by, and especially with the aid of social lubricant, I feel very little pause when I want to say hello.

An example of a chance encounter with one of the misjudged: Justin sees douchey-looking guy from across the room. Justin doesn't think

he really is douchey. Justin wants to know everything about him.

Justin: "Hi, I'm Justin."

Douchey: (surprised) "Hi, I'm [not douchey]."

No one else wants to talk to this guy, because they think he looks like an ass. Really, he's pretty damn cool, and ends up being an awesome person. True story.

Not everyone likes my forwardness in meeting new people, though. Many don't believe I'm being genuine. Some think I'm looking to take them home, but my befriending success rate is pretty good, and I've made some of my closest friends this way.

Then, there was you. Thanks for showing up. If you're still interested, I want to know more. I'd like to share with you some over-the-top adventures, and I'd like to hear your own.

This is my second column running in *Lavender*. If my other one, "Through These Eyes," is the heavy-handed entrée, "Sugar & Spice" is the sexy and sweet social dessert.

Consider this your invitation to come out and play with me! If you see me out and about, you better say hi. □

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Leather Media 2.0

IN 1995, WHEN *Lavender* Magazine (and this column) began, the leather community's media landscape was much different than it is today. Leather media were almost exclusively print. *Drummer* Magazine was the gay male leather community's iconic publication. Mister Marcus Hernandez's leather column in the *Bay Area Reporter* also was read widely. Other publications catering to the leather community included *International Leatherman* and *The Leather Journal*.

Shortly after this column debuted, leather came to the recently-invented World Wide Web when Joe Gallagher started Leatherpage.com, which collected a variety of leather-community writing (including your humble columnist's) in one place.

In 2011, *Lavender* and this column are still here. *The Leather Journal* still is publishing. Everything else mentioned above is gone.

What has replaced them?

Instigator Magazine has assumed the mantle once held by *Drummer*. Leatherati.com is an online source for leather news and opinion. Otherwise, leather/BDSM/fetish media have changed along the lines of other media. Plenty of leather is on Facebook if you know the right people. For fetish, Fetlife.com has become "the kinky Facebook." More blogs, podcasts, and websites exist than one person can

hope to experience in a lifetime. Recon.com and many other sites are for hooking up.

This new leather-media landscape is both more and less than it was in 1995. Much more information is flowing, in many more forms, produced by many more people.

So much information, however, leads to less focus, and, too often, less quality. As with the rest of modern media, we all are swimming in more data than ever, but it has become more difficult to pluck the information of the best quality and the most relevance.

Magazines have professional editors, writers, and designers. We trust editors to select the most important and relevant stuff from the barrage of information. They assign professional writers to present the information clearly, while professional designers package the information in an attractive, easy-to-read format.

Today, too often, these functions go unfilled. Blogs and websites allow anyone to be a writer and designer—regardless of whether they actually know how to write or design. The profusion of available information frequently means we all have to be our own editors.

So, because you're reading this, thanks for editing your media diet to include *Lavender* and this column. □

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COLUMBUS, OHIO

Gays restored the brick homes, the pride of German Village, in this town (2010 Census population 787,033) that boasts three-dozen gay bars

COLUMBUS DISCOVERED AMERICA. Then, gays discovered Columbus. This cool Ohio city stakes claim as the third-most-welcoming GLBT town in the land (after—duh!—San Francisco and Key West).

Columbus boasts three-dozen gay bars. A gay men's chorus. A gay hockey league. Gay tennis and bowling clubs. Creative positions with the big-name fashion brands headquartered here, from Abercrombie to Victoria's Secret.

And who restored all those glam brick homes, the pride of German Village? Who keeps the Short North retail/entertainment district ahead of the curve? Who populates Franklin Park Conservatory, whose flora comes adorned with Chihuly glass? Who's posing in the topiary garden, amid Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon*...done in clipped shrubs?

German Village showcases red-brick houses from the 1850s, when one-third of Columbus boasted German heritage. Brewery workers occupied those narrow numbers, while their bosses got a bit more show-offy. Today, they're reclaimed sans any trace of oom-pah, as proven in German Village Guest House, all contempo, from cool colors to hot java.

Shops like Caterina outfit the Village with imported home accessories. The Book Loft occupies a 32-room warren (map provided). It's probably wise to stop first at nearby Pistachia Vera to lay in a supply of macaroons—the ones God eats in heaven, provided that He's a foodie—in case you're lost in the shelves for a day or two. Emerging, you'll find Mojo right next door, ready with whatever restorative you require, from cocktails to coffee.

Or fortify yourself at North Market, housing food vendors of every stripe. The



(Clockwise from above)
Columbus Skyline. Photo by
Randall L. Schieber • Farmers'
Market Plaza at North Market.
Photo Courtesy of North
Market • Barcelona Restaurant
and Bar in German Village.
Photo Courtesy of Beth Ervin/
Experience Columbus





(From left) Red, White & Boom! view from Arena District. Photo Courtesy of Nationwide Realty Investors. Mona Lisa mural in Short North Arts District. Photo Courtesy of Jeff Greenberg

uncontested pinnacle is Jeni's, goddess of ice cream, worshipped in flavors ranging from violet meringue to fig/goat cheese/cognac—cheaper than therapy, and far more effective.

Nearby lies Short North, a once-unsavory stretch reinvented as the coolest realm of real estate this side of SoHo. It's anchored by Union Café, domain of sexy drag queen Nina West. It's flanked by retail revelations like Revue (antiques, from Thonet rockers to ceramic pythons); Posh Pets for man's best friend, or TORSO for the human variety (check out its, um, enhanced skivvies); Emperor's New Clothes ("Life is fun. Dress the part"); Collier West (wacky jewelry, saucy cards); Flower Child (rags from the '60s and '70s); and Adore (sassy rehabs including watch innards as jewelry and jewelry atop pie servers).

Short North proves a perfect fit for Middle West Spirits, an all-organic distillery making primo sippin' whiskey and OYO vodka that pushes flavor, not the antiseptic stuff, as gay blade Brady Konya, co-owner, demonstrates to drop-ins. Oh, beer's your brew? Then Rockmill is your destination. In a horse barn of 1870, sommelier-gone-rogue Matthew Barbee crafts Belgian-style ales, including spicy Saison; Duvel, dark and lusty; and Tripel, hinting of dried apricot.

Locovores likewise dominate the dining

scene. Barcelona brings a touch of Spain to German Village—gazpacho to paella, with tasty stops for lamb shank livened with smoked paprika aioli.

Steer to Short North for Rigsby's, showcasing fare with an Italian accent, including calamari fritti and short ribs partnered with pine nut and Parm. The man can cook! And so, turns out, can his wife. She runs Tasi, brightening daybreak with huevos rancheros. For lunch, it's homey meatloaf, plus mac and cheese.

At Surly Girl, a classic bar and grill, mind your mouth, or you'll learn how the café got its name. Worth the good behavior: a rich posole stew; pulled pork tacos; a life-altering pizza with blue cheese, walnuts, craisins.

The Refectory is a paragon of fine cooking, served under the rafters of a former (bet-cha guessed it) church, where I worshiped the Dijon-kissed artichoke-and-crab cakes, then a perfect rack of lamb. The chef trained under French dining god Paul Bocuse. Yes, it's that good.

So's the salmon BLT at Black Creek Bistro. And the Green Cat sandwich, built of Swiss, guac, and Thai honey-mustard coleslaw. At dinner, think gnocchi mined with slow-roasted duck. That just about will hold you till breakfast, where it's smart to show up at Northstar Café for way-too-good ricotta pancakes, turkey-sweet potato hash, or

mushroom-Gruyere frittata.

Best for last: Skillet is my new amour. Here, in a pygmy-size hole in a German Village wall, Chef Kevin makes a religion of "local and organic," played out in fare like pancakes with apples and Ohio maple syrup (oh, and Ohio bacon); omelets plump with mushrooms and Swiss chard; and the dish that revisits my dreams—Cheddar grits with collard greens and smoked pork. Be good, and I'll give you a bite.

Better yet, visit <www.experiencecolumbus.com>, and come get your own.

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[MAYHEM RUGBY GEAR UP FOR SPRING SEASON]

The local gay Mayhem Rugby team's season is about to start. Rugby in Minnesota has two seasons: spring and fall. Spring matches begin April 9, and continue every Saturday through May, culminating in a major tournament in Seattle over Memorial Day weekend.

The nature of the team has changed over the past six years. What was once a novice group, whose membership included not a person who ever had played rugby, is now one with a solid base of experienced players who are always happy to introduce new people to the sport. The Mayhem also have a new coach, former team player "AJ" Jones.

The Mayhem, who are known to be excellent hosts to other local rugby clubs, had an amazing experience hosting the 2010 Bingham Cup last summer.

But Jones reminds us that drinking songs and partying are not what the team is about.

As Jones says, "It's really about being a tight-knit, open group. We have players eager to share what they know. That is exciting about what is happening here with our team. We are committed to the game, to our local union, and to competing with our fellow gay rugby teams from around the country."

The Mayhem want everyone, gay or not, to feel like they have a place on the



Photo Courtesy of Mayhem Rugby

team, especially if they never have played before. The Mayhem pride themselves on being a team that takes anyone of any skill level.

So, have you considered playing rugby? Maybe not. But when the thought crosses your mind—and I hope it will—when you join the Mayhem, expect a good workout, camaraderie, a sense of belonging to a brotherhood unlike any you'll find on any other sports team, and learning the value of competition.

Look at the newest team photo taken after practice earlier this spring, and you'll see that a successful rugby team needs men of all sizes.

Team captain Jason Prudhom, who encourages anyone interested in playing to do so, regardless of past experience playing sports, states, "I really want to build everyone's confidence as rugby players, and give our team a competitive edge."

So, can't wait to join the fray? Want to check out a few matches this season? Visit <www.mayhemrhc.com>, or e-mail <membership@mayhemrhc.com>. It's never too late to join. Practices are twice a week, with games every Saturday. ■

[Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League Play Gets Under Way]

Chances are very good that you know someone who plays on one of the many community teams coordinated through the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League (TCGSL). More teams are forming this season than ever before. So, it's no surprise that our local GLBT league is one of the largest of its kind in the country. Season play gets under way May 1.

Maybe you're not too keen on the rugby thing, but surely one of these many softball teams has a place for you. Are you ultracompetitive, or interested in an athletic social outlet? No matter: Various levels of competitive play are available among the teams.

Besides the fun, competition, and friendships, ultimate incentives for future softball players to participate are two events that are fast approaching.

First, the annual North Star Classic, held over Memorial Day weekend, will attract teams from around the country.

Second, TCGSL Commissioner "JT" Thomas is proud to announce that the Twin Cities has been selected to host the 2012 North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance (NAGAAA) World Series. To say this is awesome news for TCGSL and the Twin Cities is an understatement. Picture it: Thousands of softball players will be flocking to our neck of the woods next year. Is that enough excitement for you?

Visit <www.TCGSL.org> for more info about joining a team. ■

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—————> **Daniel Hennagir**, who recently captured the Mr. Twin Cities Leather title, will represent Minnesota at the International Mr. Leather Contest (IML) over Memorial Day Weekend.



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Quatrefoil Library Donates Books to Pittsburgh GLBT Library

Quatrefoil Library in St. Paul, one of the oldest GLBT lending libraries in the world, is donating more than 3,000 books to the Gay and Lesbian Community Center (GLCC) Library in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Last fall, the Quatrefoil Board of Directors realized the library had reached maximum capacity to house its collection. In order to provide additional space for new books and other media, the board decided to donate a large selection of second copies of books. Instead of selling or discarding the books, many of which are hard to find, the board voted to donate them to another GLBT lending library.

Board Secretary Karen Hogan and Head Librarian Kathy Robbins began searching for a suitable home for the books. The Pittsburgh GLCC Library, which was selected to be the recipient of the donated collection from Quatrefoil, presently houses more than 5,000 books, DVDs, and other media. This donation will benefit the GLBT community in Pittsburgh, so that it has further access, understanding, and appreciation of its rich and diverse history.

Quatrefoil sees this donation as an expansion of its mission: "To collect, maintain, document and circulate gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer materials and information in a safe and accessible space, in order to promote understanding, an appreciation of diversity and history, and the value of communities."

To learn more about Quatrefoil Library, visit <www.qlibrary.org>. ■



STEVEN WOLFSON

SHOPPING FOR INSURANCE is a task many customers would like to be over quickly. But if you don't do your homework, and just go with the best price, you might be setting yourself up for disaster.

Steven Wolfson, an insurance agent with Farmers Insurance Group, says, "I have a lot of people that just want to get the thing taken care of. Then, the minute a claim happens, they realize that they just dove into what was cheap, and wasn't necessarily suited to what their needs really were."

In the past, Internet insurance companies attracted business largely by advertising low rates, while glossing over reduced benefits. But Wolfson is seeing the market shift in a more positive direction.

Wolfson notes, "I think people are coming back to service. Also, as far as price is concerned, the larger carriers are now very competitive."

That's not to say lowball offers with shoddy coverage still aren't out there, but Wolfson encourages buyers to trust their gut.

As Wolfson puts it, "If it sounds too good to be true, it is too good to be true."

Finding the right insurance policy *should* take some time, both for the buyer and for the agent. A good agent will get to know a client's needs fully before recommending a policy.

Wolfson observes, "If you're not answering many questions, the agent isn't digging. No agent can just set you up with a policy without digging."

That's true of every aspect of Wolfson's business, which includes homeowner's insurance, life insurance, business insurance, and auto insurance.

Wolfson explains, "If you have an Internet policy, and you let your neighbor drive your car, are they covered or not? There's more to an insurance contract than just the coverages that are shown on the declaration page."

Fortunately, having a detailed conversation with an insurance agent doesn't have to feel like a chore. Clients actually tend to walk out of Wolfson's office happy, knowing that they were well-taken-care-of, and that their new policy truly has their back.

Throughout his years in the business, Wolfson, who frequently attends Bingo A-Go-Go, has enjoyed an especially close relationship with the GLBT community. He strives to get same-sex couples the same discounts that heterosexual married couples receive, and help them achieve legal protection through adequate life insurance.

Even if Wolfson is not your insurance agent, he still makes a point of answering any questions or concerns regarding your insurance policies. Just give him a call, or make an appointment to stop by his office. ■

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Something's Fishy

I SPENT THREE days of my spring break enjoying the Sea Life Minnesota Aquarium at the Mall of America.

But as I learned more about marine life, this fancy-schmancy fishbowl struck me as an artificial environment for these wonderful creatures.

On my second day, I saw a manatee with a crudely-drawn sign that read: "Will Do Cute Camera Poses For Food."

I was so inspired, however, that I hope to produce what I think will be a valuable contribution to the science of marine behavior: my upcoming book *You Don't Know Squat About Squid*.

While I await word whether the affordable Cousteau—Jacques's grandson, Murray—will write the introduction, I offer a sampling of my most fascinating observations:

Oyster Usually ambisexual, begins life as a male, becomes and female, reverts back to male, then changes once more to female. Has enormous therapy bills.

Electric Eel Has an average discharge of 400 volts. After sex, has been overheard asking its partner, "Was it bright for you, too?"

Cuttlefish Among the fish that use sounds for defense. Hawaiian cuttlefish, for example, repels its enemies by emitting ukulele songs at high volume.

Anglerfish Parasitically attached to the female, the male has no independent existence. Also known as Kevinfederlinefish.

Lamprey Feeds on the blood of other fishes. Only fish both studied and worshipped by Hollywood agents.

Marlin At 2,000 pounds, the largest game fish, with the possible exception of one relative: the Marlinbrandofish.

Flounder One variety can lie on a checkerboard, and reproduce on its upper surface the same pattern of squares—for camouflage. Valuable not only for protection, this skill also clinched the Grand Prize in the fish version of *American Aquarium's Got Talent*.

Puffer Fish Protects itself by puffing up in order to appear twice its real size and power to deter attempts by other fish to swallow it. Also known as Sarahpalinfish.

African Cichlid Female carries fertilized eggs in her mouth. Sheesh. Whatever you do, don't ask her to gargle.

Well, I gotta go now. I have a sudden urge to eat at Long John Silver's. Tsk. Consider the source.

Bye for now.

Kiss, kiss. □

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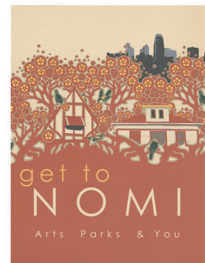
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Good News for Bus Riders

I'VE WITNESSED SOME shocking behavior on public transportation. I've sat next to people who have peeled off their socks, and then trimmed their toenails by gnawing at them with their teeth. I've shuddered in disgust as riders with drippy noses have used bus windows as their personal hankies.

As a result, every time I board a bus or a train, I get the sensation that I'm stepping onto a giant, rumbling virus.

Despite the occasional explosion of bodily fluids, it's usually a quiet journey. Until recently, I never have heard much chatter among passengers. So, I've been left alone to stare quietly out the grimy windows, and build a healthy fantasy life involving Diane Sawyer, a giant jar of Marmite, and me.

The advent of the cell phone has shattered the peace, however. In the past year, not a day has gone by that my erotic meditations haven't been interrupted by some fool shouting into his cell phone.

The conversation always goes like this:

Fool: "Hi, what are you doing? I'm on the bus. I'm at Belmont. Now, I'm at Ashland. Now, I'm at Sheridan. Now I'm at Wilson...."

It's not that I mind listening to personal conversations. It's just that these people's

lives are so goddamned boring. If someone called me, and tried to pass off a litany of bus stops as conversation, I'd yank the cell phone out of his hand, and beat him over the head with it.

I'd all but given up hope that I ever would hear an interesting cell phone conversation until last night, when I heard a conversation that was shocking, cruel, and highly-inappropriate. It was the single worst act I have seen committed on public transportation. It was thrilling!

It took place on the bus running north. I was the only passenger until a well-dressed guy stepped on, and collapsed in the seat behind me. He flipped open his phone, and dialed a number.

"Stephen," he shouted into the phone, "we have to talk."

I gathered all my passive-aggressive powers, and prepared to turn around and glare at him, but something in the tone of his voice made me think this just might be worth listening to. So, I sat still, and cocked my head in the direction of the cruel dandy seated in back of me.

It was, of course, a breakup call. Stephen, it seems, had created a horrible scene at a

dinner party. The guy seated behind me referred to it as "the lasagna incident," and said it was "the last straw."

I couldn't hear Stephen's side of the story, but I could tell he was pleading to save the relationship. The guy seated behind me wasn't budging, though.

When I turned to catch a peek at the fellow, he casually was flicking some dirt from under his fingernails. Then, he caught my eye. Instead of being horrified that I was eavesdropping, he winked at me, and smiled.

I felt sorry for poor Stephen (who, according to the guy on the phone, needs to spend more time at the gym, and less time with his mother), but I was excited for all bus passengers.

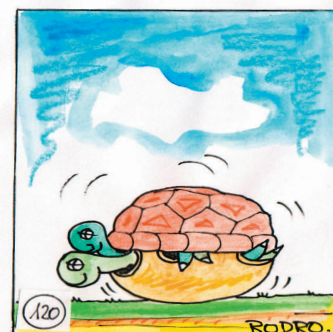
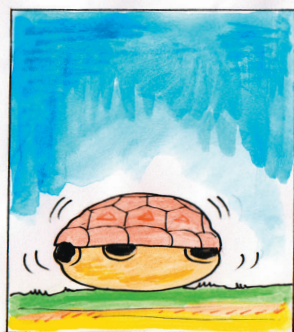
Call me a cockeyed optimist, but I'm hoping that other cell-phone users will take a lead from the terrible boy on the bus. If they are going to force us to listen to their personal conversations, they are responsible for giving us something worth listening to.

Public humiliation of a loved one is a fine place to start. ■

Hey! I wrote a book. You can buy Dateland on Amazon.

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Dear Ms. Behavior:

I keep my circle of friends small and close. As a result, I ended up falling in love with one of them. I finally decided to confess my feelings to my close friend. He said it wouldn't change our friendship, but it seems that it has. I'm not sure what to do about it.

Should I back off? Should I try to change his mind? Or should I crawl under a rock?

I'm not comfortable with having lots of friends, but being close to just a few people has its drawbacks.

What should I do (other than become even more of a celibate, and enter a monastery) to fix this?

—MR. MONK

Dear Mr. Monk:

Don't circle around your friend like a dog,

hoping that he'll change his mind. You'll retain your dignity (and probably the friendship) if you make it clear that you still would like to be friends, and then take a step back to show you really mean it.

Try to let go of any feelings of humiliation. You fell in love with someone who doesn't feel the same way. You didn't do anything wrong (unless you left out the part where you humped his leg at a party by way of explaining your attraction).

Ms. Behavior doesn't mean to offend you, but she does find that often, a crucial piece of information is missing in the letters she receives.

If it turns out that he feels superior or gets weird because you expressed love or desire, then you don't want him as a close friend anyway.

If falling in love with friends is a pattern for you, you need to expand your social life. You may feel safest starting with a group of kindhearted lesbians who will scoop you up into the warm bosom of their group without the risk of romantic stirrings.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I'm a lesbian who hangs out mostly with gay men. I would like to have more female friends, but it never seems to work out for me.

Just when I'm thrilled to have a gal pal, the flowers start coming. Then, my new friend confesses her feelings for me and wrecks everything.

Should I just resign myself to the safety of friendships with the boys, and not deal with lesbians and their unpredictable emotions? Or

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am I doing something wrong?

—SABRINA

Dear Sabrina:

Is the problem that all lesbians misunderstand your friendly gestures, or is it that your friendly gestures reek of seduction?

Once in a great while, a woman is so compelling that no one can resist her. Such a woman has charisma, a spiritual gift, and a way of making others feel they have come home. This woman is a mother-like creature, a goddess, or maybe even a saint. People—men, women, and children—can't help falling in love with her. You may be such a woman.

But another kind of woman also attracts a lot of attention. The second type unconsciously exudes messages of seduction in many of her interactions. She may not be

aware of flirting, but she puts forth an energy that goes beyond “gal pals.” She shines her intense gaze on a friend, somehow manages to provide the intimacy of a lover (in what is supposed to be an ordinary friendship), and is titillated by the attention she receives in return. Then, she acts surprised when the FTD flower truck pulls up.

Frankly, Sabrina, the flowers are what seem most suspect to Ms. Behavior. It's a big risk to send such a gift, and one that most people won't take without feeling like they've been invited to do so.

Someone who sends gifts to a genuinely baffled recipient is spending too much time by the punch bowl, incredibly unconscious, or confused by having been given a come-hither message.

If this just happened once or twice, Ms.

Behavior wouldn't suggest that you did anything to excite or to entice your friend. However, it sounds like a pattern.

So, without judging you, Ms. Behavior would suggest that you engage in a moment of self-examination. Please sit in front of your mirror, and contemplate these questions: Am I a saint? Or am I just a big panty-tease? ◻

© 2011 Meryl Cohn. Address questions and correspondence to <msbehavior@aol.com>. She is the author of Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette (Houghton Mifflin). Signed copies are available directly from the author.

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Naked Monsters

The Swimsuit from Hell purchased on impulse while on vacation vexes the buyer with keeping in shape.

THERE'S A MONSTER in my bedroom. It lives in my dresser, hibernates in the winter, wakes up in spring (to mock me), and attacks in the summer. It pinches my thighs, and runs up into places on my body I forget I have.

It's the Swimsuit from Hell.

We met at a wispy beachside clothing store in Fort Lauderdale—one of those shops that keeps the front door propped open all winter long to remind tourists that their native climates are inferior.

I was looking through a stack of "Sexy Swimwear—50% OFF!" thinking of ways to get tan within the hour so I looked hot and nontouristy on the gay beach. I could spray-tan, but then it would melt, and I'd look like a leather candle.

I'm busy thinking of this and other ways to criticize my body when I realize a guy is flipping through the Smalls who is *not* a Small. He's flipping, but not browsing. He's looking at me, wide-eyed and terrifying.

"Need help putting any of these on?" he asks nonchalantly.

Whoa. Whoa. *Whoa*. Hello, welcome to town. It's an afternoon in the middle of the week. Where the hell am I?

"I'm fine, thank you," I respond, and move as quickly as I can to the table nearest the sales associate.

The movement is an act of fate. My new spot puts the Monster in my vision.

Across the room, enshrined in a glass display case, it reigns supreme: the Mother of all Swimsuits, a tiny piece of fabric some evil designer conjured up as swimwear.



Things go blurry, and before I know it, I'm outside with the Monster in a shopping bag. I've made the investment that will haunt me for summers to come.

When I purchased my Monster, I was in great shape. I wore it that day to the gay beach, and it did what it was made to do: Turn heads. Buy drinks. Get numbers. All with no tan. Gasp!

My reasoning behind the purchase was simple: I'll just stay in shape for the rest of my life. Easy peasy.

Then, Thanksgiving rolled around. Then, Christmas. Then, whoops!—no Valentine again this year? Nothing a box of chocolate can't help.

The Monster is one of those things we buy in heat. It's that thing we can't live without until we get home, when we realize we've demonized the drawer we stored it in. It's the thing that reminds us how we *really* look—the "why would anyone manufacture this?"-inducing article of clothing 1 percent of the world looks good in.

The Monster is what it is because we make it that way. It is the hallmark of the insecure, that precious possession we dare not part with lest we lose the motivation it amps.

Our problem is that we try to do too much too fast. We can eat badly over the holidays because we'll be healthy in January, right? When that doesn't pan out, we'll just indulge until April. That gives us a whole month—or two, if you live in the Twin Cities—to get back on track.

So, for four weeks, we eat right, go to the gym for an hour a day, and cry ourselves to sleep at night because we're so hungry—all in hopes of looking good for the summer.

Like pouring Drano down a clogged pipe, crash diet-and-exercise works really well really fast, but if you don't stop washing your hair down the drain, it's going to clog again.

This summer will be different *for real*, I've decided. I'm approaching it the way diets are supposed to be: sustainable. If that means going to the gym just one more day a week, or drinking Sugar Free Red Bull vodka instead of regular, so be it. These are changes I know I can make, and keep.

If we can build up simple changes, like running just 10 minutes more on the treadmill, or drinking one less drink out on the town—changes we can live with—before long, we'll approach those monsters in our dressers as we did when we met them: not symbols of insecurity, but symbols of hope. ■

Thanks to Brendan Murphy, who's sickeningly healthy, for the inspiration.



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